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# PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

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## DISPENSING OF HABIT-FORMING DRUGS.

**A CONVICTION OF A PHYSICIAN UNDER THE LAW OF TENNESSEE UPHELD BY THE SUPREME COURT OF THAT STATE.**

On page 2903 of this issue of the Public Health Reports appears an opinion of the Supreme Court of Tennessee which may be of value as a precedent.

The Tennessee law requires that physicians shall be in personal attendance on patients to whom habit-forming drugs are distributed or dispensed by them. The court stated that the law "is modeled after and closely conforms to the act of Congress later passed and approved December 17, 1914" (the Harrison antinarcotic act).

A detective secured from the defendant, who was a physician, a prescription for morphine, stating that he desired the drug for a friend. The detective then took the prescription to a pharmacy and had it filled.

The court held that the Tennessee act was constitutional, and that the fact that the drug was secured by a detective for the purpose of obtaining evidence for a criminal prosecution was not a valid defense.

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## VIRULENT SMALLPOX.

### AN ACCOUNT OF THE OUTBREAK LAST WINTER AT LAREDO, TEX.

During the period from December, 1914, to April, 1915, an outbreak of virulent smallpox occurred at Laredo, Tex. The first case occurred December 9, 1914, in an inmate of an orphan asylum for girls. The source of infection of this case was not determined, but no additional cases developed in the institution. On January 16, 1915, two cases were notified, one of which was in a family long resident in Laredo, the other being in a family which had recently come from Mexico. One case occurred January 23 in a man who had been in the Mexican Army and who came across the border January 17. On January 29 two new cases developed in the same families in which the cases were reported January 16. During the week ended February 5 five new cases and three deaths were reported. No new cases or

deaths were reported during the next week, but on February 15, 1915, 16 new cases were found, and during February a total of 101 cases, with 11 deaths, was reported. In March there were 63 cases and 14 deaths, in April 38 cases and 7 deaths. No cases or deaths were reported during May and June. A total of 208 cases, with 32 deaths, occurred during the outbreak, giving a fatality rate of 15.38 per 100 cases.

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## PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION IN CHICAGO, ILL.

### A STUDY OF THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

By J. C. PERRY, Senior Surgeon, United States Public Health Service.

[This is the fourth installment of this report. Previous installments will be found in the Public Health Reports Aug. 20, 1915, p. 2442; Aug. 27, 1915, p. 2536; Sept. 10, 1915, p. 2695.]

#### BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS.

The essential duties of the bureau imposed by statutes and ordinances are (1) registration of births, (2) registration of deaths and control of the disposal of the dead, and (3) statistical tabulation of birth and death records.

The work of the bureau has been handicapped by limited appropriations and it has been impossible, on account of lack of funds, to employ a sufficient personnel to index the old records and compile the data contained therein. During the period from 1909 to 1911 the appropriation for the bureau was reduced one-half. This resulted in curtailment of its work, and the effect has not yet been entirely overcome.

*Summary of ordinance provisions.*—Before taking up the consideration of the different functions of the bureau, a brief summary of the ordinance provisions is advisable in order to show the authority for its various activities.

Existing ordinances provide as follows:

It is the duty of the commissioner of health to provide necessary books for keeping a record of all transactions of the department, for the registration of births and deaths occurring in the city, and such other records as are necessary for the efficient working of the department. He must keep on hand the necessary blanks and furnish them to physicians and midwives on application.

It is the duty of every physician or midwife who attends the birth of a child to report the same, with name and date of birth, to the department within 30 days.

It is the duty of every physician or midwife to make a written report to the health department within 24 hours of the death of any of his or her patients; in event the death is a coroner's case, the report is made by that official.

Any person desiring to act as an undertaker, prepare dead bodies for burial or cremation, or manage funerals, etc., must be licensed, and it is unlawful for any person to engage in such business prior to obtaining a license.